(d) whether there is any proposal to lower the eligibility age under the scheme?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) 23,347 accounts have been opened under the scheme, in post offices, in the State of Karnataka wherein an amount of rupees 689.38 crore has been deposited upto March 31,2005.

(d) No, Sir.

Collection of taxes/excise duty on tobacco products

4242. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) what were the total taxes or excise duties collected on all tobacco products in the last three years respectively;

(b) the break-up of such figures for the five major products;

(c) whether revenue or health is the criteria in fixing such taxes or their rates; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) and (b) Separate revenue collection data from five major products is not maintained. Such data is maintained under four budget heads. Total revenue collection from tobacco products during last three years in respect of these categories is given in the Statement (See below).

(c) and (d) Revenue consideration as well as the fact that tobacco products are health hazard goods, are relevant for raising taxes from this sector. In the 2005-06 budget.a surcharge has been imposed on a number of tobacco products for financing the National Rural Health Mission.

Statement

Total Revenue Collection from Tobacco Products

(Amount in Rupees crore)

Description	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04 (Apr,	2004-05* 04 to Jan., 05)
Cigarettes and cigarillos of tobacco and tobacco	5060	5140	5495	4842
Biris	357	360	348	285
Chewing tobacco including kara masala, kimam etc.	631	632	614	460
All other goods falling under chapter 24	396	292	190	200
TOTAL	6444	6424	6647	5787

*Provisional figures.

Rate of Interest on Provident Fund

4243. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to increase the rate of interest of Provident Fund/Public Provident Fund to 9.5 per cent as has been done by Government in the case of Employees Provident Fund;

(b) if not, why a different yardstick is being applied when in both the cases the beneficiaries are the employees of Government/Public Sector Undertakings, etc.; and

(c) whether Government propose to compensate Government/PSUs employees through some other method in view of this differential rate of interest in similar cases?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) No, Sir. There is no proposal to increase the rate of interest on accumulations under General Provident Fund and Public Provident Fund. In respect of the rate of interest on Employees' Provident Fund accumulations for 2004-05, the Central Board of Trustees of Employees' Provident Fund Organisation have not recommended the final rate of interest to the Government.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.